Wordeater Issue #115

Front Cover Art
Beach
by Debbie Peak

Wordeater #115

Table of Contents

Writer/Artist	Title	Page Number
Brandi Campbell	The Lump Science	4
Katy Schweikert	One Step Forward Two Steps Back	13
David Doran	Will I Ever See Her Again?	14
Faraz Khaja	The Box	15
Matthew Barker	The Storm Thought Weapons	20
Nick Billone	Divine Right in the Hands of Those Who Will Fall	22
Clay Bowler	269 Cuckold Lane	26
Lisa Raimondi	Alice Thru the Revolving Door	27
David Doran	Dreaming of You	28
David Doran	Confession to an Angel	29
David Doran	Don't Leave Me	29
Aurelio Benavidez III	Imposed Identity Internal Pain	30
Serenity Tomala	Porcelain Doll	32
Serenity Tomala	This is a Poem	33
Irving Manuel Gamboa	La fuente de pensamientos	34
Irving Manuel Gamboa	Fountain of Thought	35
Roxanne Hall	A Day Never Forgotten	36
Roxanne Hall	Lights	37
Colleen Douty	My Monsters	38
Irving Manuel Gamboa	The Giant (and his love)	39
Samantha Gehrig	To Whom It May Concern	40
Kristin LaTour	Superimposed	41
Katie Parker	Romantic in the Opposite Way	42
Katie Parker	Sleeping With the Fishes	42
Katie Parker	Down the Hall	43
Irving Manuel Gamboa	21st Century Prayer	44
Shi	Silent Screamz	46
Shi	Let the Tears Fall	47
Shi	I am a woman	47
Nick Billone	The Wonder and the Wanderer	48
Submission Guidelines		50
Awards & Acknowledgements		51

The Lump Science

By Brandi Campbell

Grubby fingers leaved through books like worms in the grass during smoldering summers at the Montagueville public library. Garage sales were crawling with overweight wives and their babies, like maggots surrounding a garbage can. Bee abdomen pustule bloated bellies surged through musty clothes racks, wrapped in reptilian tanned skin like sausages, popping soma and pushing strollers. Men folk plugged along to their hellish construction jobs before the sun came up, the twentieth gas station within a five mile radius was just being built, and most of the town's numerous bible Baptist churches were filling up with their daily thumpers awaiting their next fix. The bible belt tightened each day as filth and waste and excrement burst from every pore. The teens were all hopelessly bound to one drug or another, but that didn't mean that the thumper's opiate wasn't any less deceiving or manipulative. Military officers marched like Nazis through crowds of youth, seeking out the most desperate and naïve among them to snatch up and transform. Radium contaminated water spouted from kitchen faucets spreading cancer like a plague, and nobody cared to do anything about it at all.

May Keenan was just opening things up at the library, retrieving another copy of *Leaves of Grass* from the basement to restock the shelves. For the past few months, it had repeatedly come up missing with no explanation, which left the library's regional manager, Dick Neibling, particularly angry. The man had an almost homoerotic admiration for all things American male author, and would be infuriated if he wasn't able to drop in any old time and easily access a copy his absolute favourite book. May and some of the other librarians had decided to order the book in bulk for such the occasion that it came up missing. May rarely chatted with her coworkers any other time. She was intoxicated by the scent of her own body odour—especially in the summers— and for this reason did not wear deodourant. She much rather preferred the enticing pungent goodness of her armpits every day then the stinking small talk of others' rancid breath. It was a sort of yeasty sour primal sexual deliciousness that kept her company. Other times it was a sweet smell, like a baby just waking up from a nap. The other librarians did not regularly associate with her for this reason, but also because May Keenan never wore brassieres, and her flailing boobies made them all extremely uncomfortable.

In the Montagueville elementary school, when our May was just a wee lass of about ten or eleven, she sat quietly eating her raw green pepper during snack break. (The child was a vegetarian for several years at this point, and preferred raw greens.) The other children ran about the classroom, jamming slim jims or cold cuts into their pudgy little mouth-holes, when one day, they decided to 'snap' training brassieres. (Training brassieres are very important, because one must train like an Olympian for difficult and arduous tasks such as wearing real brassieres.) Little May did not know what hit her. It was as if every single girl simultaneously decided to go out, purchase training brassieres, and not tell her about any of it until the snapping ensued. She had missed the boat. By the time junior high school rolled around, it was time to dress in gym uniforms, which left the poor thing feeling scared, naked and exposed—having no brassiere and all. This made for quite the spectacle among other, more matured individuals of the time. Time ravaged her youth, and she eventually grew obsessed with lingerie, acquiring a rattling number of brassieres to fill her heart's content and make up for the awkward years without them. As a woman in her mid-twenties breaking into the exhilarating world of library sciences, she became a compulsive brassiere hoarder. One day while eating her ciabatta cucumber sandwich , May discovered an article on how brassieres could cause cancerous breast lumps and actually increase premature sagging. After work that day, May spent the evening operating on all of her brassieres to discover that the laced silk outer beauty was merely a façade, concealing dark metal wire and ear wax coloured foam within. All of the ugliness hidden beneath was overwhelming; she decided to never cage her breasts in such a ridiculous contraption again. However, she thought it a waste to carelessly dispose of them, and decided to save her hundreds of curved under wires, using them to weld artistic sculptures. This grew into a new obsession. On her days off, she loomed over the brassieres at department stores, selecting ones with suitable under wires she thought would make an exquisite addition to her growing collection of sculptures. Shelve-bras, half-cups, A,B,C, training, black, white, push-up and padded— May had them all. At home with her family— she never got a place of her own, because she spent the majority of her paychecks on brassieres and welding supplies— May received substantial criticism for the braless state, herself being the unfortunate spawn of brassiere cult zombies—but this did not stop her. On the contrary; it encouraged the practice. If she lived her life trying to appease others, May thought, she would not get very far in her endeavors. If a large proportion of individuals is not cynical of the choices one makes, May believed, that individual must be doing something quite unsatisfactory. Popular opinion has rarely proved admirable or desirable in hindsight, thus, May continued to let her tits sway and flop freely.

Quinn Lump had been working at the Montagueville library as an aide for quite some time before May began to take notice of him. He was a beautiful little waif of a man with limp wrists which coiled to his breast in an almost cripple-like position. His stance somewhat resembled a t-rex's or prairie dog's. There was a slight trace of a gothic youth within him still, though he was now in his early twenties and just entering the trite plight of adulthood quandaries and concerns. Mr. Lump was not like the other males with their deep voices, calloused hands and brutish weaponry used to kill one another for absurd little triumphs. Quinn pranced about the library, befriending old women. On any given afternoon, one could find Lump chatting it up with an aged librarian, discussing recipes or exciting bits of classical literature. May noticed that Quinn was different; he was special. Limerence or not, our May was not interested or tricked by that special loin tingle that mere glances of Quinn induced. Oxytocin was a function, like everything else. Crushes were a means to perpetuate in a world with such little light— nature is deceptive like that. May was not fooled by her primal, subconscious desire to procreate with this androgyne-varmint. Those women Quinn chatted with all had it bad for him. The kids who came to the library had it bad for each other. Everything, everywhere, served the sole purpose, directly or indirectly, to procreate. Genitals became encouraged all over the library underneath long denim dresses and knee-high stockings, but May was immune. She stood alone watching Quinn snicker with his ugly little endearing chipped teeth, while chewing the cuticle on her ring finger, wondering what was so special about that one digit.

Quinn Lump had a secret agenda in attaining that library job, and it was to steal as many copies of *Leaves of Grass* as he possibly could. Rarely did he read one. He enjoyed their smell more than anything else. He made paper sculptures out of them. The only books Quinn ever received were ones he requested as gifts from relatives, but never did he request books by American male authors. It seemed to him that most of them, especially Whitman, only knew a dozen or so words and, in attempt to sound poetic, rearranged these words and recycled them into similar phrases over and over again. Suns crawled across skies before sinking behind horizons, there was usually dew on stuff, and the sounds of children playing could be heard from somewhere off in the distance. Reading Whitman was like shoving rotten hearts into his rectum. These pieces of literature were all drab pits, like the pitiful little snake pit of Montagueville. They were worse than the scent of May's armpits. Sometimes when not creating his sculptures, Quinn enjoyed walks in O'Shea woods all by himself while foraying in the wonders of psychotropics. He enjoyed the suffering induced after the branches and wood smacked and scratched at his flesh. Because he spent all of his money on the psychotropics and paper sculpting supplies, he was unable to actually ever buy a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. So, the blood-sucking insect continued to frisk about the library, seeming sweet and timid, checking out books with those bizarre limp wrists of his. All the while Quinn, but oh so softly he did, crept beneath the noses of his admirers, gathering the materials necessary to curve the brilliance of his latest greatest pieces. To the old ladies, Quinn was the cat's meow. He had them wrapped around his spindly, transparent little finger. Sometimes when May let her guard down, she found herself watching him make gestures with those flaccid fish belly white hands, wondering what it would be like to hold one, or have one hold her.

They met one summer when May began a pesky little compulsion of watching beheadings over the internet. Lobbing, slashing, bashing, or mashing— May watched them all. She could not comprehend how someone could do such a thing, and yet she saw it before her very eyes. The first time it brought vomit. The second it brought tears. The third and fourth weren't so bad. Nothing seems shocking if it's witnessed a certain number of times. Each new time a person was captured and displayed pleading on the evening news, masked men releasing repulsive chants of ruthless human breath behind them, May's mouth would water with excitement and glee as she anticipated the deadline and inevitable doom the unfortunate victim had to face— similar to the way slack-jawed mother fucks experience orgasmic frenzied excitement over a pig hunt! It was morbidly beautiful, like witnessing an obese family dine at a buffet restaurant.

Quinn concealed his stolen books in his lunch bag after using a plastic butter knife to remove the tape and identification tag that caused the alarm to sound. Sometimes during May's lunch breaks, she preferred to sneak into the elevator. She never pushed any buttons, but allowed it to go up and down while passengers entered and exited. On occasion she had to exit herself, because someone would stay on for too long, or get off and on repeatedly. She didn't want anyone to see through her thin veil of normal by looking too closely at what she was doing. On a Thursday afternoon, Lump was having a rather difficult time removing one of the book tags. He snuck into the semi-crowded elevator, peeling it off slyly while the passengers exited. Eventually it was just he in the front, and May in the back. He did not notice this until she spoke. There he cowered, positively defenseless, as the black sticky balls of tape clung to his knobby fingers and book cover. He felt like a helpless zoo animal with dozens of judging, pompous human eyes of idiocy gazing upon his frail figure.

"Uhhh-hi," quivered Quinn, "I was just…uhhh." His radiant grey eyes grew large like a Roman votive figurine with fear and embarrassment as he dropped the book to the floor and his child-like hands curled back to the safety of his breast. May was stunned to discover that Quinn Lump was the *Leaves of Grass* culprit. She couldn't help but melt a bit when looking at him.

"I won't tell, just as long as you put it back," May had mercy.

"But I can't!" shrieked Lump, "I can't; I must have this book!!!" May picked it up and looked at it, perplexed as to why any human being in his right mind would ever want to steal, let alone own, a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. She had to inquire. Following the inquiry, Quinn explained his compulsive, uncontrollable urge to steal the book. "I've tried other mediums like toilet paper or construction paper, or pages from other books, but other than using the pages of *Leaves of Grass*, NOTHING WILL WORK! I must steal this book to construct my sculptures!"

"Sculptures," May's ears and eyebrows perked, "You …create sculptures?"

"Yes," said Quinn with a hopeful heart, "and *Leaves of Grass* is the only medium that I am able to work with! I must have this book— I simply must! You don't know what it's like to only be able to attain creation from one material— only have one facet with which to construct something so vitally important to existence—"

"But I do!" Quinn was cut off by May, in awe as she meticulously explained every detail of her brassiere-chronicled, under-wire ridden life. The elevator went up and down, opening and closing. Each new passenger was an annoyance, along with the beeping in between. They exchanged tips, insightful bits of sculpting history, and all at once, there was a date set up after work to meet in O'Shea woods and discuss art further. Break was almost over. Before they both exited the elevator, May promised to keep the *Leaves of Grass* thievery a secret. She even agreed to smuggle books out for him.

She was tense the rest of the day. The indifferent clock seemed to race by, and before she knew it, she and Quinn were crushing leaves as they furthered into O'Shea's bush. Not long after, he revealed his inspiration for his art as he pulled out a small parcel of psychotropics and offered May a foray. May had never learned anything of psychotropics being harmful the way meat eating or brassieres are. They seemed like perfectly harmless nontoxic bits of heaven; as such, she had no scruples in partaking on this journey with Quinn when he offered. Quinn thought that when walking in the woods on psychotropics, he had to keep a sketchbook handy, because the psychotropic-induced self told him secrets about the art of paper sculpture making that the regular self missed all of the time, and for this reason trusted his unconscious self as the creative control.

" I become aware new kinds of dimensions," said Quinn, "I have to write it all down so that I don't forget. This is my only means of inspiration with which to transcribe this special world into my materials."

"That sounds complicated," giggled May as she jumped off a log and her dying pear breasts wiggled to-and-fro, to-and-fro, to-and-fro. Quinn was struck with the desire to ask her again about this brassiere business.

"So, you think that brassieres are wrong?" he inquired.

"Well, it just seems silly— going through all of that trouble and discomfort, just to fit a social norm of having weird stiff looking boobies. They aren't needed. We've moved on. Brassieres are stupid like meat eating is primitive. Everyone's tricked, but I've figured out. I'm rather proud of myself for being so keen on what's best. I am not fooled"

"What's so terrible about meat eating? Aren't we all fooled in one way or another?" asked Quinn. May's eyebrows twisted into an uncomfortable look.

"Whatever do you mean? I don't understand why anyone eats meat unless that person hasn't considered things enough," said May.

"Though I am not a vegetarian," Quinn began, drawing a large gasp of air, " I agree that the way we treat animals is completely unacceptable. It is unnecessarily cruel, and should be stopped. However, I accept that taking life is an inescapable part of being a living creature. I think that vegetarianism in general does little other than foster a sense of self-righteous hypocrisy in a person. I do not understand what makes the life of a cow more valuable than the life of a carrot, or the lives of the billions of microorganisms who are slaughtered on holocaust scale every time you draw a breath. I do not think people ought to feel guilty for eating other mammals, after all the very reason there is such a rich diversity in this great big living family is so that we can enjoy the luxury of eating one another. It has been part of a cow's cosmic destiny, since she was nothing more than disparate bits of scattered star dust, that her atoms would gather and assemble themselves, so that she might be consumed by a wolf or a man or a vulture and have these atoms disassembled again and spread throughout the universe. The funny thing is that this will happen regardless of whether or not I or all humans decide to stop eating meat; every cow that is born will meet a violent and horrible death and the twisted meat grinder apparatus will go on a-grinding in spite of our silly and self-

important disapproval. I see nothing wrong or evil about this practice and I resent anyone trying to make me feel guilty about it."

May was baffled. Throughout all her years of vegetarianism, she had never thought of these things. It just *felt* right to do, and that's why she did it. "But what about PETA?" asked May, "They try to stop the grinding entirely and make it all go away, make it *illegal."*

"The problem I have with PETA," began Quinn, as his tiny hands balled into tiny fists, "is that they are an organization which attempts to spread guilt and fear, simply because they believe that they have ascended to a moral platform above those around them and which excuses their behaviour.

"I'm sorry if you think they are 'right', and you seem to hold the opinion that anyone who disagrees with your position simply hasn't thought enough on the subject. That is far from the case. People who hold views which differ from your own do so because they do not think like you do. Why is it so important to you that all your opinions be 'correct'? How on Earth could they be with your being human and all? Should you trust these views or should you question them as well, as you do everyone else's, and perhaps even reject or discard them?

"None of us here are 'correct' or 'right' or 'good' and I heap scorn upon any person who attempts to advance itself as such. Most of the organizations like PETA simply exist to provide people with the sense that they are somehow superior to people who are not a member of such groups. It's why people 'belong' to churches. It has to do with the time tested method of combating the emptiness and horror within by convincing yourself that, though you yourself may be bad, at least you know that there are those lower on the ladder than you," Quinn had calmed down and was queerly proud of himself for what he had just said. If he was able to make love to himself, he probably would have.

"Oh, like abolitionists from when slavery was legal?" asked May

"Yes, exactly like that," said Quinn.

May was still confused, "Well, what about people who chop off other people's heads? They're not wrong? If a man isn't wrong for shooting a dear for sport, then no man is wrong for slicing off someone's head and broadcasting it over the internet? What if I want to eat human babies like people eat veal?"

"I'm glad that you realized it's no more immoral to eat a baby than it is to eat a carrot," Quinn said smilingly, " I'm glad I didn't have to make this point to you, that the thing about good and evil or right and wrong is that... well... they don't really exist. People made them up, arbitrarily, as adaptive tools to be used or discarded as the situation deems fit. Had it been beneficial for our society to eat human flesh, I assure you we would have. Many cultures still do, and to them allowing your enemies (or for some cultures, relatives) to die without consuming their flesh is considered wrong. So who's right?

"From your point of view, you are right in not eating meat, just as Okwe the headhunter is right for dining on the spine of his rival (or mother). How can this be? Because there is no such thing as a universal 'right' or 'wrong', at least not in any logically supportable definition. Cultures develop their own concept of what is right and what is wrong, who deserves justice, and who is unworthy. They assign comradeship to beings who are more or less similar— fellow Master Arian Race, fellow European, fellow Christian, fellow male, fellow human being, fellow primate, fellow mammal, fellow vertebrate— to justify the slaughter of whichever different group they oppose. To separate themselves from the groups they wish to dominate, they often create false assumptions that they are somehow divinely different than the opposed group. Humans and animals have much more in common than we are led to believe. We are both flexible in sexual preferences, we are both capable of love, we suffer equally, and we both sometimes enjoy killing one another. And even within these cultures which assign right and wrong, what seems like justice to one individual can seem like oppression to another. Also, as humans, we have such a narrow concept of the repercussions of our own actions that to label an action as inherently good or bad is rather short sighted and arrogant.

"So why do people seem to behave morally? Because in order for a society to survive it is necessary for a majority of the citizens to appear to conform to the prescribed morals a majority of the time, in order to preserve the illusion of order imposed on chaos. As such, it is necessary for an individual within the society to appear to act morally in order to function and be accepted. That is the only reason, and the only reason anyone ever has. Sure, some people do sincerely believe in the morals they profess to live by, but believing in something does not make it true, although for all intents and purposes it might as well.

"Remove societal accountability and watch how moral people act. *Sometimes they even eat each other*....And that is why Quinn never raised his hand in class. **Ever**. And that is why you will never convince me that eating meat is inherently wrong. First you will have to convince me that any act is inherently wrong. I would never eat a baby, though, because I like them a lot more than I like cows, just as you, arbitrarily, value cows over

carrots. Can either position be supported? Isn't it all more or less strictly a judgment call? I don't like ladies with brassieres either though. They're simply preposterous, in my opinion." Quinn finished as he folded his little hands over his lap and pursed his lips together.

"What about…God," asked May, "Doesn't God have a difference between right and wrong?"

"God is indifferent, May. God doesn't care about us," Quinn giggled a ghastly little giggle.

"W-well," spouted May, "I guess I never th-thought of it that way." Her heart beat. The little androgynous Lump just delivered a fuhreresque speech that made her question everything she ever thought was best. He simply smiled calmly at her and flashed a chipped tooth. "Well that's not a nice universe at all, though, I guess you are…well…right, huh?" said May. A hot tear rolled down her cheek.

"Absolutely," said Quinn softly as he caressed her hand. "You look so beautiful with the sun setting behind you," he said. May blushed. It was getting late. The both of them checked their respective timepieces. Still shocked as if the ground was pulled beneath her and she was standing somehow, magically over an abyss, May looked to Quinn.

"Would you like to see some of my pieces?" inquired Quinn. May agreed, feeling a strange new chemical dance and bubble within her veins. Down crumbled black roads, men mowing their laws were coiled in fat that resembled bloated serpents. Small chubby children with no teeth or shirts scampered like rats in the skuzzy wasteland of Montagueville, and Quinn led May to his dank dwelling. Inside the living room were two horrid looking people in midlife laying on the couch, watching TV. Neither of them acted as if Quinn even walked inside, let alone with a person they'd never seen before in their lives. They simply continued staring at the television like robots as Quinn took May's hand and guided her into his bedroom. It was a corner nook. A television was on in there as well, muted.

"Quinn, don't your parents wonder where you go after work, or who it is that you're bringing into their home?" asked May. Quinn gave a faint smirk and said,

"Sometimes I think my parents were almost criminally liberal toward me, though I can't complain for the lack of rules, and it seems I've turned out better than those raised under more strict of households." May wondered how this man who claimed to disbelieve in the concept of right and wrong would be able to deem his lifestyle "better" compared to anyone else's, but she stifled these thoughts— stuffed them in a far away crevice of her subconscious. Together they sat in silence on his futon for several moments, until Quinn got up, went to the kitchen, and slithered back with a plate of microwaved beef burger.

"Sorry, but I haven't had anything to eat all day. Would you like to have a bite, May?" tempted Quinn.

"Well, maybe just one bite," said May. One bite couldn't hurt—*just one bite.* It had ketchup and cheese on top. It was on a blue plastic plate. She was delighted by the taste she hadn't experienced since very early childhood. Quinn admired her as she chewed, dabbing the ketchup off of her lip with a napkin for her.

"Would you like another bite, May?" asked Quinn. She obliged, until the both of them took so many bites that it was no more. Distant thoughts rushed back to her of a time when she ate meat nightly with her carnivorous kin, before discovering the chilling truth about what she was consuming. After that, May looked around his room, noticing his various sculptures on shelves. They were mediocre at best. Almost all of them looked like piñatas molded to look like faces— two different faces were repeated in different sizes and colours. He had one shelf of books, and the only authors on it were ones of Friedrich Nietzsche and a 'psychologist,' Carl Jung. Between these books were large heart-shaped picture frames with both Nietzsche and Jung's pictures inside, and little stickers of their heads cut-out all over that wall. He also had a pillow slip with Nietzsche's picture screen-printed on that he intimately snuggled every night, and a lunch tin with Nietzsche's picture on it. He never brought that one to work.

"Are these heads all molded from Nietzsche and Jung's figures?" asked May.

"Yes," said Quinn, "Most of my pieces are modeled after their heads." Indeed, there was not an original looking head in all of Quinn's collection. There weren't even any that resembled his own. May complimented them nonetheless. After that, Quinn leaned in to kiss her. It was soft and gooey with a saliva string connecting them both after their faces separated like an umbilical cord. They continued, working into a mechanical frenzy before either of them realized what was happening. Quinn began to remove her belt.

"Oh, I don't know, Quinn," started May, "I've never done anything like this before, and I fear…I fear I may…it's just that…I don't *believe* in this sort thing, these feelings, this emotion, it's all so cliché…I know that it will wilt like a flower in the blink of an eye, and you will be gone…and yet I—" Quinn put his tiny hairy index finger to her lips and began another heartening monologue, this time soft-spoken,

"I remember there was this fat man who came into work once, grossly obese, his skin covered in boils, all over his face and hands like warts on a toad. He only owed $.80, yet he tried to claim he renewed his items over our

phone renewal system, except that, as you know, we do not have a phone renewal system. He was obviously lying, trying to weasel his way out of an eighty cent fine, clearly a disgusting man both inside and out. His wife was with him, and she could clearly tell what he was doing, as we all could, and she kept giggling and smiling, as though she found his behaviour adorable. She did of course, because she loved him, and he loved her, even though no one besides the two of them could understand how either of them could find the other attractive. And they weren't just attracted to each other, they were in love.

"It's really all there is May. I know that sounds like a cliché, but I remember someone defining a cliché as a truism whose truth just hasn't been experienced directly. But there really are few things worth living for in this world other than love. The universe we live in is cruel and cold, and love is like this blanket we have to wear to keep from freezing.

"Please trust me, May, not to hurt or abandon you. I know I am asking a great deal in this, and know that you have little reason to, other than my assurance, but I am here and I am not going anywhere. I promise not to disappear from you. And once you've opened up to your love for me you may find that the world is quite full of love. For all the very real pain and emptiness in this world, the only real balms we are provided are dreams, hope and love. Hardly a realist's best friends, I know, but I have yet to find anything else. I wish there was a way I could bring you comfort and contentment rather than apprehension, as you are like a balm and a blanket to me."

"But Quinn, we barely know each other. Don't you think this is a bit too soon? Quinn, we have only really met each other today. This is absurd," rebutted May as she gazed dreamily into his eyes.

"I do not wish to reason this away, and know that it has happened over shorter periods of time to much more reasonable creatures than you and I. Since the very first time I noticed you alone, saw your flopping tits, and inhaled that fabulous fragrance your armpits exude, I knew that you would be my beloved. Let us revel in the absurdity of it all, my beloved sculptor!" squealed Quinn, and with that, May dove into another one of his kisses as they rapidly began removing one another's garb.

Quinn's toes were in a perfect mathematical pattern of rank, each one slightly smaller than the last. He did not have those kind of feet where the second toe is somehow, ridiculously longer than the first. The vein in his cock was as beautiful as the vein in the arm on Michelangelo's Pieta. The frenulum and foreskin were present, and oh, sweet heavens of the most divine right, it was perfect, unmutilated, intact bliss! Deep down, May had always dreamed of a cock without scar tissue! Quinn was the greatest sculpture that May had ever beheld.

She endured stabbing surgery pain as he thrust-thrust-thrusted with all of his might into her librarian loins, sheepishly excreting embryonic grunts, like a new born rabbit or guinea pig. His movements persisted as the both of them schlepped deeper into the bowels of banal Montagueville mating rituals, bodily secretions and all. May could not help but regard this limp-wristed creature with a certain degree of pity. *Quinn...Lump. Lump, like a goiter or a struma— an oomph-loopma struma— or a nugget per se—yes—a half-eaten chicken nugget one would find at the play area at McDonalds, just before becoming swept up with the other trivial dust particles and lost hair. He is an abomination like all the rest— an insignificant puff of rectal gas desperately trying to succeed, clinging to his folly hopes and dreams in a world much too windy and inconsistent for one to remain autonomously composed.* This thought whispered through her with such despair for the both of them, caught up in an ugly mess of library business and sculpture making in that rotting town, that her heart burst. Just as his cock reached the wall of her cervix, she was helpless— completely and totally at the subjection of Lump— entangled in his web of seduction, as the rhythmic futon bed metal created a Morse code-like noise. Her sacred slit reverberated like a breeze-blown purple flower all over him until the two of them merged into one complete and isolated sculpture. May was a rose in winter, whipped by the wind and torn by her own thorns— and Quinn Lump was her guardian angel— her *gardening* angel. He was shelter in a cold and indifferent existence. Our librarian, finally, fell in love. When it ended, Quinn fell asleep, and time seemed to stretch forever as she laid there staring at him while stupid stuff happened on the TV, amazed that someone could look so beautiful bathed in the light of a cathode ray.

The summer scent of citronella and blue-collar barbeque filled the night air, soaking the inside of May's small nose as she returned home. The television was on full blast. Heads of each member of her family turned in sync as she stepped inside— even the cat, who was sitting in the middle seat between May's mother and father.

"Where've ya been, May?" her father asked as he jammed unnecessary amounts of greased pork rinds into his encompassing throat-hole, "You're missin' The Wheel."

"Oh, we had a new shipment that needed to be unloaded. Sorry. I'm going to go to bed. I'm very tired." May smiled at her ceiling as she slipped into deep sleep and dreamt of cured strips of bacon, seasoned lamb legs, sautéed South Americans, oysters sliding down her throat, clam, mussels, Nazi lampshades, scallop wrapped in

bacon, roasted pheasant, deep-fried monogoloids, foie gras, southern-baked veil, cerebral palsy patties, and bloody steak that drips like broken hymens.

May's life rapidly transformed after that, into one where she no longer took pleasure in long afternoons of card catalogue sorting and book returns, and instead of one perpetuating her dire need to get off of work to be with Quinn. A new obsession was born. Every day, without fail, the two of them would meet after work in O'Shea's thicket, May giving him his sculpture materials, while foraying in their psychotropics, and proceeding to make love at his home or anywhere else that deemed fit for such activities. She began leaving work early and gave excuses of sickness. It was a sickness, really, what had happened to her, so she wasn't lying. She became very weak. The other librarians began to take notice. Months passed that May and Quinn did this. No one suspected a thing, and did not at all relate the disappearing *Leaves of Grass* copies to Quinn or May's illness. New security sensors were installed, however, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to please Dick Neibling's intense craving for Mr. Whitman. The library's budget became cut as a result of trifles in the outside world— a world beyond the safety of brick walls of libraries, and a world outside the one that May found herself in— love. The head librarian called a meeting with May and her peers. They would no longer be able to purchase the cases of *Leaves of Grass,* and the fear of the repercussions Neibling would take if they told him about what had been going on was unbearable. Nervous murmurs of budget cuts and *Leaves of Grass* could be heard all around as May silently sat, twiddling her thumbs. The aides weren't invited to the meeting, but she knew what she had to do.

The next afternoon while Quinn was lifting heavy dictionaries with his thumb's thenar muscle and forefinger in a futile attempt to make his hands look more masculine, May walked to him quickly and discretely.

"You can't take *Leaves of Grass* anymore," she whispered, "The library budget is getting cut, and we are really low on funds. There is one last copy other than the one on the shelf, and we won't be getting anymore, Quinn. I'm sorry." She sped away as Quinn continued his weight-lifting, only now with a glum, angry glare in his eyes. After that, Quinn emitted all sorts of conflicting signals toward May and eventually just stopped showing up to work. The elderly women were confused and devastated by their loss. It took them a very long time to recover from this crushing blow, though the seemingly coincidental ending of the *Leaves of Grass* crisis had calmed them somewhat. He no longer answered his door or phone. Each day that Quinn's lapses continued, May grew evermore obsessed with him. The consumption grew exponentially. She decided to make him a heart-shaped mobile sculpture with shoulder-strap tendrils of white and red, and wait underneath his big green car until he went to it one day. She slept there over night, and in the morning at around eleven, Quinn walked to his car carrying a piece of Russian lacquer art with a painting of Jung on it. Just before inserting his key into the keyhole, May popped out from underneath the vehicle, covered in asphalt.

"Quinn, hi! I haven't seen you in weeks! Have you been ill?" She hugged and kissed him and shook his shoulders with a mad grin on her face, pushing her mobile sculpture to his chest and saying, "Here, I handcrafted this from scratch just for you, because I knew you weren't well and it would cheer you up unlike anything else!!!"

"May, I obviously no longer wish to see you. I would have thought you'd realize this by now from my extremely rude, passive-aggressive behaviour," remarked Quinn coldly. May disregarded what he said, and continued with her ranting.

"Quinn, I've been thinking this over, and I think we should procreate! Just think of it, Quinn! You and I together, making babies! We could raise our crotch fruit up to be great leaders with vast social issues and urges! We could both get fat, work for the library, and live in Montagueville forever— Die here!— be buried in the Montagueville Resurrection Cemetery! Let us settle into married life, child-rearing, and obtain endless flows of nick-knacks from the home shopping network to adorn our blissful domestic nest! We could purchase a home in one of those lovely subdivisions on the edge of town that resembles the set of Edward Scissorhands, except without all the colour! We will paint the insides beige! We could join a sub-division association, patrol the neighborhood on a tandem bicycle, and spend ridiculously large amounts of money on lawn care! Oh— I love you Quinn Lump! I always will! Nobody can do for me what you can, and I'm quite certain the same could be said the other way around! Nobody is good enough for you but me!!!!! I love- love- love you!" Each psychotic statement she made was like the stroke of a violin or crashing of cymbals in an orchestra movement.

"May," began Quinn, "These past few months have just been terrible for my psyche. I've always had a problem with people. As a young Lump, all I ever wanted to do was destroy them all, en masse, to better the Earth and my own fragile sanity. I was doing good the months leading up to meeting you when I found Carl, but when I regressed and began our relationship, all of these thoughts started coming back to me. Now that I'm aware, though, I can better myself and spread the gospel of Carl."

"Carl?" asked May as her eyes filled with tears and she began to quiver.

"Yes, Carl Gustov Jung, my saviour. I want my pieces to leave noticeable alterations in our species' collective psyche. I want to save the world through the word of good 'ole C.J. Psychotropics are a terrible, terrible thing, and I am so ashamed to have made the mistakes I did with you. You were nothing more than my thirteenth step," continued Quinn.

"But Quinn," begged May, "What about our love? What about it being a blanket to keep us from freezing? What about your sincere sentiments and our devotion to one another?"

"That is called codependency, May, and when you accept Carl into your life, you too will learn how terrible it is to have those kinds of bad, unhealthy feelings," said Quinn.

"But…I love you. Why would I want to learn about that? How could it be unhealthy to love and care for another person, to become attached? Isn't that the reason for living?" May bleated out.

"No," said Quinn, "and through twelve-step programs, you too can learn the ultimate truth about why it's unhealthy to love and need another person. You have a disorder. One is much better off alone in an obscure cave dwelling, crafting pieces."

"Order?" May whimpered, "I thought you didn't believe in truth? I thought you didn't wish to reason our love away? You promised not to hurt, abandon or disappear from me, remember? You *promised*."

"I have to go be alone with my pieces now, May. This type of unhealthy behaviour of hiding underneath my vehicle is called harassment, and it had better stop, or I will be forced to alert the authorities," said Lump firmly. With that, he entered into his large green vehicle like a tortoise in his shell and drove away from May, crushing the delicate wire heart sculpture with his tires, leaving her without a balm or blanket in the stagnant shallow gene pool of Montagueville, discarded like one of his used prophylactics and dangling lifeless like his hands.

Those darned pieces were the only things that mattered to Lump. Like a spider he stalked from library to library, literature department to literature department, befriending new women, new names, new faces— new Mays— repeating number thirteen over and over again. This was the name of Quinn Lump's game. He did not miss one beat, and a-rum-tum-tum, he lurked wherever he sniffed out the musty, old man musk that *Leaves of Grass* radiated. The moment one felt comfortable, inviting—completely manipulated— the wee hands swooped down unto their unsuspecting prey like falcon talons, and another *Leaves of Grass* went missing.

As the years progressed, May imagined the two of them running into one another at some hip art showcase in Los Angeles where his paper sculptures and her under wire sculptures would be on display the same night. They would be drawn to one another through a sea of trendy shabby-chic pseudo-artists with sleek physiques and black-framed glasses, fall madly in love all over again, wonder why they ever stopped talking, and together they would sculpt a bloody path of art across the world. Other times, on stormy days, May would envision the two of them as geriatric relics in the nursing home across town, making eye contact across the game room through a gaggle of old ladies. Together they would spend their golden years, inseparable, even going so far as to share a double-bed room on the top floor with a balcony and good view— he constructing his paper sculptures and she with her under wire ones. May would change Quinn's diapers, and they would cleanse their dentures in the same cup of Efferdent at night. Grey hair would cascade in waves as the two of them nestled together in an eternal slumber of cozy codependency. Never did her thoughts stray too much from Quinn, and if they did, oh what a short time they did, his face or tortile hands would certainly pop up again like a recurring viral infection as quickly as they had gone away, dancing like ghosts through her thoughts. It was unbearable. Again one night, late one night, she concealed herself underneath his vehicle sitting so serenely in the street like it did years before. This time he walked to it, baring a name tag on his chest of a used book store a couple of towns away. However, May did not pop out in front of him, but grasped his small hands when he wasn't looking, tied him helplessly immobile with a strapless demi-cup, and easily maneuvered herself into the driver seat. She drove quickly to the woods and dragged him to the very center by some WWII cement bomb storage compartments that Montagueville was too lazy to ever remove.

"What are you going to do, May?" wept a waify Quinn.

"I must do what I feel is best. I no longer like you like I do not like the carrots," started May, "I must get rid of what I do not like. It's only natural. This has been your cosmic destiny for always," said May as she tied his shaggy black hair into a pony tail, clearing a patch of milky naked neck. She stroked it gently. "Okwe would agree with me on this one, wouldn't he Quinn?"

"Stop it May! This is unhealthy! What would *Caaaaaaarl* do?! Let me free!" cried Quinn.

"Only if you admit to me that this is wrong Quinn! Admit that this is wrong like meat eating is wrong!" May looked to him, searching for the answer she so desperately wanted.

"It's— this is— wr…wrooo—," Quinn tried to produce the sentence, "What I mean is… what you're doing right now is not riii-riiieeeee—this is wroooo," but try as he might, "Wro! Wro! Wroooooo!" huge Slavic lips

making pitiful O shapes like pink inner tubes, "I think that this is wroooo—nooowrroo," mustering the strength to say it, "Wrrrrrow-wroooow-wro!" he could not finish it. He gazed wearily at May, pleading with his gun-metal grey eyes for mercy.

"What is the difference, Quinn, between my desire to extinguish you, and a fellow's desire to extinguish a rodent or insect, objectively speaking?" May towered over his mangled looking body, hands knotted behind him helplessly, "Where do you draw the objective line, Mr. Lump?! It's all or nothing!"

"I don't know! I don't know! Just let me go! I want to go back to my pieces now! This is *illegal!* Who cares if it's wrong or not! Who cares about god! You can go on living without killing me! ***My suffering is completely unnecessary for you to live***!" Quinn quivered with confusion and anguish like a raccoon skinned alive or duck having a metal pipe jammed down it's throat or a cow on her way to the slaughterhouse, but as much as May screamed and begged and pleaded for his admittance, he would not confess that his imminent decapitation was wrong. Left with no other choice, May had to do what her judgment called for. Quinn had to go. A large blade emerged from seemingly nowhere as she commenced the decapitation, so skillfully, like she had seen happen to the men in orange jump suits, only this time using the cement chunk for a chopping block. Quinn's world rotated for several moments and his body appeared oddly distant from his vision, light flickered, and he was no more. Wind danced through the sycamore leaves and into her hair, the October chill whipping her cheeks a rose red. Her shadow eclipsed the ground before her. Hungry swilling woodland creatures gathered 'round the soupy pulpy pallid corpse to consume his flesh, while May made sure to keep his brain and head contents for nourishment in her own belly long after his departure. Never again did she partake in the unnecessary torture of another animal, though as she left, finally relieved, she began;

"Free at last! Free at last! Hallelujah, we are free at last!" thus spoke May Keenan, "*Quinn is dead*!"

One Step Forward Two Steps Back
By Katy Schweikert

The pain in a heart dwells forever, hugs and kisses even phrases of "It's ok" and "I'm here for you," don't make it go away.

A knife jammed so far in, someone twists it every once in a while to help remember the pain inflicted.

Looking in the mirror the pale, saddened eyes staring back swollen to twice the size, bloodshot and sickly, the face looking washed a thousand times it seems with no color. Hair matted, untouched and unbrushed, lips chewed so far down they bleed every time they speak; rage and passion shadows the mind.

Clouds of deceit roll in like a wave, making judgment unreal.

After a splash of bone-chilling water on the face, a deep breath is taken.

A deadly silenced house makes this ten times worse.

Walking into a room with posters everywhere of punk bands and pictures of friends and family.

In rage they are all torn down.

there's only one way out of this hell hole.

So the decision is made,

a strong leather belt is hung from the ceiling.

Placed around a neck as tight as can be, family pops into mind, a picture in hand.

One last breath, then all that is heard is a scream and the house is silent again except for the sound of the body swinging back and forth.

A door opens, the chatter of movie and dinner, fill the house.

The phrase "honey, we're home" is yelled.

But, no one answers.

No worry; teens are normally home later. Hours upon hours go by. Anticipation fills the house.

Checking the house from top to bottom, there is a scream so fearful and so harmful it almost breaks glass. The cry of a mother cuts into the flesh and squeezes the heart so you can't breathe.

The running into the room seems as slow as ice melting on a cool spring day.

The belt is unleashed from the neck, hands trembling making it even harder to do.

Faster, faster, blood runs though the veins

Tears falling down a face like waterfalls, even a whimper is made.

The grief and moan of "NO," is repeated over and over and moving to phrases such as "Why?" What went wrong?"

A father stands back and falls to the floor calling out the name of his child. A slow steady crawl over towards the helpless, lifeless body.

The call is made, a car comes and picks up the body with the marks around its neck. The arm falls off the stretcher, a picture falls to the floor.

The arm is moved back on the top and is zipped up in a bag.

Heads turn away and blinds are closed. The pain so unbearable it just makes you weep.

More calls are made.

All that is heard on the other side are cries of people's lives that are changed forever.

No one saw it coming yet people still try to find a blame.

Funeral day has come the church is packed with friends and family.

When the reverend spoke all was silent but pain and sorrow in the hearts swelled. A man walks a slow steady pace every step heavy with grief. A face as white as snow, a tremble in his voice.

"I will always love you!"

The casket was closed.

Will I Ever See Her Again?
by David Doran

I don't know where I am. What I am doing here is an even harder question to answer. I know I am here. To say that here is somewhere, since obviously I am still alive. I would have to be somewhere to exist, but here is still a mystery as to where *here* is. So in that respect I am here and nowhere at the same time. Complicated isn't it. I have time to think about these things. I have time to think very much about these things now that I am alone.

I cannot see where I am, although I do have a vague idea. I do know that I am at an enemy facility, most likely behind enemy lines. What I don't know is where? Near the border? Near the coast? I have a rough guess at how I got here though. My unit was assigned to infiltrate a warehouse, secure any prisoners and eliminate all threats. Who would have thought things would have gone so awry?

Bravo team got slammed. We lost one man in the entry and then another in our sweep. They were hiding everywhere. I almost picture it in my mind, but I can't. All I see is blackness. I remember what happened though:

> The hallways leading into the main storeroom were dark, there was a hailstorm of bullets, Zigs couldn't duck in time... He never saw it coming. He fell to the ground and all we could do was count the bullet holes in his body and return fire. My magazine was out. Had to reload. Release, drop, insert, cock ... the moment it took to reload my rifle was all the time needed for that concussion grenade to detonate. It was no more than a foot and a half from my face. I didn't see until it was too late. Then I just couldn't see.

The blast must have knocked me out because I woke up in this cell. I don't know much about this cell. all I know is by what I feel, what I see smell, and what I hear. It's a small room, about ten by eight feet in perimeter. Theres a window, that I know. I can feel the sun shining on my face. That's how I count the days here. By my record it's been about one hundred and fifty two. I have had no word from any of my squad. There was only two of us left. I have not heard anything from my captors either. They have tried to torture information out of me but were lacking a translator. All I could understand of them was "Where is your base?" and "Where is your superiors location?" Rest assured they got nothing from me. They finally stopped a week ago. I believe their attempts to find information were a bit half hearted and seeming only for amusement. Either way it didn't make the beatings or shocks any less excruciating. Now it is day one hundred and fifty three and I haven't heard from my captors in over a week. The food and water have stopped, and every sound seems to be that of silence as if death has snuck into this little bunker and stolen every life but mine.

Over this time of what seemed sensory deprivation I thought of her. I thought of my angel, back home. For days now, while hunger ravaged my body, her memory ravaged my mind. I wanted so badly just to open my eyes and see her face. I want to open my eyes and see her beautiful body, her brilliant smile, and her wavy red hair. But when I open my eyes, all I see is blackness. Darkness. I can't even picture her in my mind. How pitiful-

A sound. I can hear noises. Gun fire I believe. Footsteps and running. I can hear mortar shells exploding. I can hear automatic fire. More footsteps... louder... closer. The door slams open and the noise pours into the room. The men lift me up by my arms not bothering to untie my hands or my feet.

Just now a thought occurs to me. Are these enemy soldiers? Are they allies? Shouts drown my ears. I cannot hear anything but the grenades and guns. Suddenly a blast throws me to the floor, my saviors/captors with me. Through all the noise and all the hysteria, I can think of only one thing:

Will I ever see her again?

The Box
by Faraz Khaja

As soon as his mother closed his bedroom door, Danny jumped up and opened the door to his closet. He dug out a box from the deepest right corner. It once held Nike running shoes. It was under two other boxes and his winter boots. He went back to his desk and slid his science book from his desk and sat cross-legged on his bed. On the top of the box he had written in big black script, DANNY'S BOX.

During the school year, he used to keep his box in his locker in case of a random raid which could happen at any time during evening hours. Typical scene after a raid: Danny looked, holding back tears as he saw all the drawers of his desk on the floor with all his papers and collectibles strewn all over the floor by it. His bed off track and jutting out, covers looking like they were tossed back on randomly. His clothes rumpled and piled sloppily in front of their chest. His books still intact on the shelf but pulled forward about to fall out.

And after one of these raids he noticed that the closet was the only area left un-touched. So Danny knew he found a safe, yet readily accessible area for his things.

Danny looked at his stash. Lots of stuff in there. He kept the stash in the box-fortress for two years, since age ten. Baseball trading cards, figures, and especially his two-hundred-strong—and counting—comic-collection comprised mainly of X-men and Spider-man. His comics were extensions of himself—Spider-man has a double-life as both Super-hero and struggling reporter and husband. The X-men work on being there for those in need while seeking acceptance and understanding with those not like them. Danny was them and they were Danny. His Father considered it all as work of the devil, something which deserved a very bright future—in an inferno.

There were candles in Danny's box too.

Once when Danny's father was out of town for a whole week at ministry school, Danny and his mother had the house all to themselves. His mother gave him a tape-player and
headphones. She made a chocolate fudge cake and put eleven birthday candles on top, even though his birthday had passed by a couple of months.

"These aren't birthday candles, Danny," his mother said that night. "We'll just say it's Happy-To-Be-Alive Day."

"Danny, the grass!" his mother called from downstairs.

"Ok!" Danny shoved the box under his bed instead of its usual spot. It would be safe there until after dinner.

Danny was sweeping the last of the grass leftovers from the driveway, when his father pulled up in the driveway.

Danny and his dad did not greet each other as the standard father and son would and he could not remember when they stopped talking normally to each other. Danny quickened the sweeping pace, finished, and put the mower in the garage. Just as his father, Reginald, was getting out of the car, Danny headed into the house through the side door.
Reginald frowned.

Danny's father was taller-than-average, brown-haired and blue-eyed just like Danny (though Danny had yet to show the height-part). He wore a gray polo and gray pants and brown workboots. He put his keys in his pockets and still wore his frown. "Come here, boy."

Danny bit his lower lip as he walked toward his father.

"Let's see your hair," Reginald said as he ran one bare hand over Danny's flat hair. Little patches stood up now. "Just like I thought. You're overdue for a haircut, so come with me into the kitchen."

Danny slumped and lost his eyesight—or were those tears moving around? He watched his father take some utility scissors and an old sheet from the kitchen drawer. Danny grabbed a chair from the dining table and sat in front of his father, with head down and his vision not any clearer.

Reginald took out a large-toothed comb from his pocket. He whipped the sheet out in front of Danny, making as much noise as he could, and then draped it around Danny. The sheet covered Danny completely.

Reginald stalked behind Danny; he combed out Danny's hair as if he had an audience, although he was alone with his son.

Danny's vision grew worse and he tried not to squirm in the chair.

"Hold still, no need to get yourself hurt," Reginald said. He turned on the clippers.

A clump of hair fell to the floor. The buzz of the clippers vibrated in Danny's ears as his father scraped the clippers across his head-mop. The hair looked like brown cotton balls lying on the white tiles. Danny's shoulders hunched and his chin touched his chest.

"Sit on up, boy," his father ordered as he mowed a section of Danny's hair.

Danny raised his head a little, stiffened in the chair, and gripped the seat cushion under the old sheet.

"Hairstyles today are a disgrace," Reginald said, launching into a sermon perhaps. "Men today are trying to grow and curl their hair up as a woman does. I'll not have that in this house."

Danny got away with that for awhile. Everyday before his father got home he would grease his hair, comb it as flat as he could, and then pat it down evenly so that it would look shorter. Before dinner he'd shower and rid his hair of the grease and wear a baseball cap after he combed
it dry. Before he went to school he'd grease it up again and pat it down as evenly as possible. This took a half-hour each morning. When he got to school he would take an afro-pick out that he carried with him and would pick his hair out as full as he could get it. Lucky the grease didn't harden until then.

Danny was beaten now though. He frowned and his eyes were slits. He decided to take the plunge: "Everybody grows their hair out. It's not like it was when you were young…" Danny shut up because his voice failed and he balled his fists up under the sheet and slid a little in the chair expecting to be struck by lightning.

"Sit up," Reginald said. "That's nothing but the devil, boy, and you're not gonna follow those evil kids at school. They'll just lead you down the wrong path."

Tears finally escaped Danny's eyes.

"Tears won't do you any good. I will not have that evil barging into my house."

Danny wiped his tears away, growing angry inside now.

"There, now you look proper," Reginald said, surveying his work. "Now go and get ready for the meeting tonight."

When he came to his room, Danny stared at himself in the dresser mirror. He ran his hand over his almost bald head. He shook his head and he nearly wept at the sight of his near-nude scalp. He wore his hair as an outfit, a uniform and it was rudely torn off. Accordingly he felt violated. His mind went blank.

Danny always made it to the car first. It was as if by being first he could hurry the night along by pulling or pushing it forward like prodding a reluctant dog straining
at its leash. He leaned against the wood panel of the four-door station wagon and waited for his parents.

Danny wore a black suit, white starched shirt, and a red bow-tie. The small plastic briefcase to hold his Bible and song-book he'd use that night were in his right hand. He leaned back and forth so he could wrinkle the suit and maybe mess-up the straight crease.

Finally his parents came out and climbed in the car. Danny stopped moving around in the backseat and tried to get comfortable. His shirt collar pinched at the back of his neck. His scalp still tingled from the haircut. He allowed himself a sigh of disgust. The haircut was for
the meeting tonight, Danny guessed. Not something to look forward to. Choir, sermons, and reading every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday evening took a lot out of him.

There always was good food at the meetings though, Danny had to admit. But that didn't ease the humiliation caused by his voice cracking during the songs recently with the choir-group—fellow kids dragged to meetings too—any
easier to deal with. The choir group—the only friends his father allowed him to hang around with. They probably wouldn't like him anymore and they'd laugh and he'd have no friends at all after that.

To make things worse, there also was last week: Danny coming in from the back-door of the meeting hall after finishing a hotdog on the porch, running late for the meeting. And for all that trouble he stuttered a few times through "Amazing Grace"—obviously ruining the flow—and he noticed his father blushing in the gathering, politely-muffled snickers from the other parents, him stared at just like a zoo-animal.

Danny shook his head violently and tried not to think about all that.

When his father began backing the car out Danny settled back and tried for a nap…counting sheep—a loud clanging noise came from the back of the car.

They all jerked their heads to the left to look at the place the banging had come from.

"Was that the trash can, Reginald?" Danny's mother, Gloria asked.

"I don't know, I'll see," his father said as he put the car in park, got out, and walked to the back of the car.

"Danny!"

Danny jumped in his seat. Reginald's face was framed by the car window, and Danny could see him glaring through the window.

"Boy, how many times have I told you to put the gas can away after you mow the grass?" Reginald said, holding up a gasoline can in the window. The can had a big dent in the front and Danny could smell the fumes coming in.

"I…I forgot," Danny said, looking down.

"You stupid, good for—"

"Reginald!" Gloria interrupted as she turned around in the car seat. "He didn't mean any harm. Anybody can make a mistake."

"Gloria, he should know better. You're always too easy on the boy."

"We'll be late. Just forget about it, Reginald," Gloria said with a sigh.

On the way home from the meeting, Danny swirled his tongue around a cone topped with vanilla fudge ice cream. He was glad his mother suggested they stop at Dairy Queen after the meeting, partly because it was so hot outside, and maybe it would help his father forget about the gas-can incident.

Reginald maneuvered his milk-shake cup and pulled the car into the driveway.

Danny scooted lower down his seat to make himself small, so small that he wouldn't do or say the wrong thing to set his father off. He wanted to be careful.

They all got out of the car and went into the kitchen through the side door. Danny wanted to get to his room as fast as he could even though he knew he'd have to finish his cone first. Danny sat in one of the kitchen chairs and crammed the rest of the cone into his mouth. He swallowed it with great difficulty. Maybe he would get his box out and look at the clippings some more…his stomach flipped.

He forgot to put the box in the closet! He got up from the table and headed to his room.

Reginald wiping his nose by the garbage can in the kitchen grimaced as if he had eaten an apple and discovered too late the housekeeping-worm. He went on high-alert and charged upstairs.

"Danny! You come here now! What are you up to?!"

"Nothing, nothing," Danny said quickly, half-way to his room.

"We'll see about that…" And lo and behold they reached Danny's room at the same time. Danny's mother came also, knowing as well as Danny did that a raid had begun.

There was no way to tell when a raid would begin. But it would begin with Reginald poking and prodding through a target area as if he lost a hundred dollar bill.

Danny's mother knew all about the raids. Reginald would search her purse when she was the target, him shouting out accusations of her hiding things from him. Then he'd go through her drawers of her dresser screaming accusations of her wanting other men in the meetings. "You want him, don't you, don't you?!"

"What are you talking about?" Gloria would ask.

In Reginald's own anguish he would understand—without any evidence except a faded nightgown folded in the drawer and his cheated, forsaken, tormented spirit.

After a raid Reginald would gather letters, mail, magazines, or whatever and pile them in the backyard and he'd burn the raid-collection.

"I don't have anything!" Danny yelled. He knew it was too late.

Reginald burst in his room now. Danny and his mother stood outside of the room watching every move Reginald made. Reginald stalked through there and opened each drawer in Danny's bureau and looked through each thing slowly.

"Reginald! Stop this!" Danny's mother shouted.

Reginald focused on the desk now, placed just inches away from the bed and the box. Danny saw the box because, as he realized, the covers did not conceal what was underneath the bed. He slowly walked in toward the box. Maybe he could kick it further underneath so it could be spared. Maybe there was a chance he would not be seen.

Danny and Reginald though made it to the box at the same time. Danny was almost about to cry. Danny stuck his foot to the box to nudge it out of sight, not knowing that his father already saw this. Reginald scooped it out and held it up like a trophy. He tore off the lid and shuffled through it and immediately made his verdict clear: "These are the Devil's works!" And out he went with the trophy for the ceremony.

"Reginald, stop it! Stop!" Danny's mother shouted.

Danny followed behind his mother as they went down the hallway which was a dungeon corridor most likely leading to the outside—where death would come for a sinner and all would watch. Danny learned about this

in his Social Studies class by reading ahead.

They reached the kitchen. Danny saw that his father stopped to rummage through a drawer to get his torch (matchbook) and out they went to the backward. Danny trembled all over and struggled to remain walking and to see—his tears were making it hard for him. Tears because he was a condemned prisoner about to lose himself, and all he had made of his life—death by floating through depths of air to have his neck snapped. Or better yet, death by fire.

Ah, indeed, through his shattered psyche he knew what was coming. He hung his head down like one condemned to burn at the stake centuries ago—and his father was to take the torch.

Once in the backyard, the site of execution officially, the Reginald-motor slowed down its rev and proceeded slowly like a funeral procession, a ritual.

Danny looked away to wipe his tears with his hand and looked at the box. He could smell gasoline and it would have made him puke if the shock of his box being found did not.

Danny's mother grabbed Reginald's match hand and Reginald shook off her grip as if it was an annoying mosquito to be swatted. "Reginald, let Danny have his things. They're not hurting anybody!" Danny walked back and forth, saying nothing.

"That's how it starts," Reginald began. "First the harmless-seeming things and then it goes to the big things! Nip it in the bud! It's better that bad things get burned away now instead of Danny by the Lord!" Reginald roared out. And now the match in the box also roared—the fire whooshed.

Reginald went inside after clapping his weeping son on the shoulder. His mother went inside too.

Danny figured they may have been arguing but he could hear nothing except blood rushing through his ears. Tears came out again as he tried to stamp out the last of the fire. Trading cards, clippings, action figures, and his comic collection; all of these items combined into a life-line for Danny for two years. And it was all over, for all of them. He kicked the box and watched ash fly into the night. The world, Danny, and Danny's mind all flew into the night after that…ashes of Danny's very being.

Danny was on auto-pilot but he somehow managed to hear his parent's snores and he managed to go back to his own room and shut off his lights and open his window. He also managed to sneak out of the house undetected with things he needed for where he wanted to go. And though his mind was mostly blank, on some level he knew what had to be done to have himself back again.

It seemed to Danny that it only took ten minutes to get to Hickory Creek Road and 80th Avenue, but he walked a mile and a half from his house in little over an hour.

It just hit one in the morning, and his t-shirt was sopping wet. Danny saw the latest raid, saw the burning away of his life—indeed, of all the work he had done to be normal and good at the same time. He shut his eyes and still smelled the smoke and heard that roar, that roar.

Because of the haircuts, because of the raids, because of the meetings, he now acknowledged officially, that life—his life—was but a scream. But after tonight though, Meetings wouldn't be an issue.

The Meeting Hall as it was called was right at the corner. This was a ghost town just like those cowboy movies he'd watch in the middle of the night when he should have been sleeping. He looked around and shivered. His right arm was numb from holding the gas can. The magazines stuffed down the front of his pants were uncomfortable but he wasn't thinking about that. He went to the back where no houses were, only trees.

This place looked just like a house except for the lighted sign in front.

He checked to see if the back doors were open. They were not so Danny stuffed the magazines into the gap of the doors.Danny almost laughed out loud. Let's see how Dad-o likes his favorite thing being burned.

After he soaked the magazines with gasoline in both the front and back doors he ran around putting the flaming matches in place. He thought it took minutes to get each of the matches lit but it was only a few seconds.

He stood at the back door again now and this time the whoosh he heard made him feel good.

The flames danced up the wall and when Danny saw that his jaw dropped unto the pavement. Maybe he shouldn't have done it. What would his mother say and do if she found out
he had done it? He tried to put the fire out by the magazines and got his finger burned slightly from magazine sparks instead.

He ran to the garage where the hose was kept but it could not be opened.

He realized the fire was growing. There was loud crackling and snapping through the silent night which was not so dark anymore. Could he be seen by awakened neighbors?

Danny knew he had to leave, so he did.

Maybe no one would find out.

The smoke could still be smelled at the streetcorner traffic light. He looked at the Hall again: The Red-Sea was not parted this time. This fire-sea was a sea in all its great looks and power.

Danny jogged home with the gas can through backyards. He had watched a lot of movies in the dark.

Relief, an awesome wave, washed over the overwhelming, meandering fire-sea in his brain though because his ranch house—yes, it was his and he was not at the wrong one—was visible and coming up next.

As he made his escape towards his open window—fighting between sobbing and laughing—he knew that things would never be the same indeed.

The Storm Thought Weapons
by Matthew Barker

Bubbles are essentially your last breathe of air underwater. But the storm before … the thoughts of the storm are unthinkable. I, like so many others, am in the storm now, frozen in time by the strike of a lightning bolt. There is no escape now; I must vent my frustration. Forget it! Forget it all! Forget life! It brings nothing but pain. The sorry. The misery. The picked on child. The lost kid looking for a soul to steal. No individuality depicted. No feeling left overturned. Forget it all ... because life is not worth it ... and thoughts are deadly weapons. Reader of life Beware: The storm swallows us all, and death is this storm's name. Only then will we all be blessed and peaceful; only then may I sleep out these tired and troubled words. Thoughts are weapons, troubles are meaningless, and life is pointless. Awww ... but bubbles are beautiful. Death has its own distinct pattern of beauty and perfection ... And the storm is nothing but the unrest trying to find there way. Thoughts are weapons ... I say it over and over again, with each thought exploding off the page. The clouds. The dark menacing clouds, have already been in my head for quit some time now. So much so that I can almost see the storm bubbling inside me. The humidity drop, the rain ready to pour. To my left I see the clouds in my mind, to the right I see a grassy hill, a clear sky, and a path leading back to my youth. Knowingly choosing the side I wish to go, I run full throttle into the storm. The rain falls, like bullets hitting life; like the renewed after the rain. Lightning cracks, the roars of the great God clapping sounds, the storm has swallowed me whole. There is no sign of the way I went to go back. Crack! Struck by lightning again, frozen in time. No escape … the words flash in the sky in the next blink of light from the storm. Thoughts are weapons. Thoughts are indeed weapons ... and dangerous ones at that ...

Divine Right in the Hands of Those Who Will Fall: Prologue, Story, and Even the Author's Comments

by Nick Billone

Prologue:
Good in the hands of an evil man
is the equivalence of a sun in the face a closed eyes.
Seeing and believing are two different virtues.
One is the act of a rationalist and the other,
the other is the act of a bad judgement.
Unseen and unknown, lives are lived.
Blank expressions don't describe enough.
God is NOTHING but a good idea to me,
a comforting force for people who need that very comfort.
A thought that it will all be made okay.
I need not do things for myself,
a prestigious man is watching over me.
A good idea taken for granted,
in the hands of those who will fall.
Divine right in the hands of men who will fall,
its equation is a constant circle,
but with prods and pricks all around it.
Like the vines around the head of a man who saved them.
Its answer is never ending.

The Story Will Now Be Told:
Under this predestined stream of a city.
Lies a city filled with heartless houses and dismantled lives.
Torn, lacerated, and left in divisions.
Skies grown dim and immediately dark.
Streets filled with weary people.
Night has come but you can't distinguish it from day.
Fire rises from the hearts of the masses.
The lamp posts stand, but shed no light.
Water ascends, trying to reach the heavens from where it was made.
Rain is what we made with every doleful day.
Produced from the equations of the sick and vile.
The only thing that stands is a chapel and some homes.
It's steeple high above the stream.
Cross glowing bright, what a beautiful sight. (And only a sight)
Hymns broadcasted till the centuries end.
The off white walls reverberate the sounds.
Troubled voices raise up high for the heavens.

Stream lined across the wave lengths over the overcast skyline,
is the cries of desperate lives.
Above the clouds a hero lies.
Their trust are prayers sent to him.
Divine right is suicide when you
press your hands together only for guidance.
Their fingers laced like crossed wires.
The little children cry.
Their pure little souls are misguided.
Faith was imprinted into them, not a option.
Doctrine is the new craze to believe
as the damage has yet to suffice.
They cry out to their new found belief.
"When will he answer us?"
Only a white dove is in sight.
Its body pure and righteous.
The townsmen within the pale white cry for their lives to be drawn out for them.
It's the definition of a worried man.
Mary's statue begins to weep.
The tears stream down to her feet and her arms open wide.
I think she feels sympathy for the men who abused their faith.
Where fate was alienated, it has now become like a phoenix.
Reassigned inside their souls as a last chance.
Like an open door.
The door was always locked, filled with reserves.
Stored for a rainy day just like today.
It has been flung wide and the people all dive in.
Taking portions of faith just so they will be saved.
From the houses, the people who stayed are on their roofs.
They can hear the low pitched cries,
coming from those within those stained white walls.
"Our Father Who Art in Heaven"
It is just a child's nursery rhyme.
Never do we plot the day we will die.
Never did they realize it would be in the place where their birth was conceived.
The birth of the child in within the church.
Some of the men hold a gun to their heads,
all placing the soft but yet firm, cold barrel to their heads.
The device shaking in their hands, struggling with their false ideals.
Can they repent and have faith that they lost so willingly?
When they repent, will it be sincere?
Could it just be a lie they say to their all knowing?
Drink the body and the blood and he will run through you,
so the story book and their elders tell them so.
If they had their chance, they would impale his palms to the cross again

just to save themselves. Would tears be shed?
They were doomed by the day they were born.
Their cradles were just an open casket.
The people will crumble with their sanctuary.
Belief is not for only when you require it.
The chapel collapses with all those indoors.
Break into two like the cross his chest.
Faith was between every splinter of that wood
but now there is not a splinter left on his cross.
What is left is just cracks, where faith has lost its way.
Where an angel would be singing its harmonic tune,
the screams of a million souls cry out for direction.
They only cry because they are disillusioned.
Disillusioned by the lives they lead, the ones they lead on.
Lead on and leave, and now they scream out for a quick fix.
An easy way out because self-improvement is to big of a task.
"Everyone thing will work out because of him."
Making a weekly trip will save them.
So here is there comfortable beds, their homestead.
A certain picturesque tomb for them to lay.
The yellowish hue, used to be white, now stained red, walls
cover the, little to comparison to the cement blocks, bodies.
Divine hands are not divine when your falling with your faith.
The violent storm has already hit it's peak and is diminishing,
and all the townspeople applaud for the waters never rose above their necks.
All those who sought refuge in the abandoned house of their God,
with their pessimistic views, turned optimistic dwindling inside their heads,
were and always will be the first to go.

Author's comments:
If I were to believe, it would not just be for a day.
Not just a day when the sun would hide away
and all the faces in the street were gruesome and ill-faded.
If I were to believe, it would be for eternity.
Belief to me runs deep, deep into the soul.
Independency is just as big of a virtue as belief.
Sometime's I think we're drunk with the pamphlets and
brochures to the point where we don't see it anymore.
Too distracted by pastors and priests
and their teachings, telling us how to live, how to thrive.
Survival is what you make of it.
Don't be deceived by what you don't believe.
I think we're all a little too afraid of what comes after death,
to think clearly about today.
Today I will not worry about the wrath of tomorrow.

Devoting my life to keep myself safe from tomorrow's hole in the ground,
tomorrow's possible halting at the gates,
or tomorrow's possible nothing at all.
Just a bed in the soil where my soul can finally rest.
Whatever I come to pass after my life, is just okay by me.
I refuse to live my life in fear that someone else,
no matter a how high of power or no power at all,
did not feel my life story is not good enough for him to read.

269 Cuckold Lane
by Clay Bowler

The crumbling foundation hides deeply
In the marshy farmland of northern Illinois
The wedding house stood with so many dreams
Just another story of sprawl
For the neighbors driving by
never saw a crumble
In-laws praised this new house of frank
Often they mingled just above
Drunken on vodka martinis and other chemistry
Required by the hostess of the abode
A habit she learned from mother's secret
All those years ago.

Empty bedrooms decorated
for unfertilized dreams
That a low count will never fill
Even after many treatments later.
The missing part seeks her heart
Leads her to other beds
A new secret part she plays.

Electronic romance, late at night as he sleeps
The Oklahoma salesman will be in town
In few nights time. A limo ride magnificent
The miles, his company credit card
Pays for the space between her legs
Two strangers meet deep inside
And one morning soon after, she takes ill.

Through the worries,
Masked with shots of sloe gin
She schemes and plans
It will be his, I can make him believe
The fissure hides deep within,
This joy is not his
The crimson tide flows–
Tears of ache-tears of reprieve
As dear hubby scoops another man's
Charity out of her gory bowl.

Alice Thru the Revolving Door
by Lisa Raimondi

I beg you. Be brave.
Like Alice through the looking glass,
You start a new adventure.

Just up the corporate ladder,
And through the narrow window.
I beg you. Be brave.

And as you kick away the hands
Of those who failed before you,
You start a new adventure.

As the media molds your new ego,
As the proverbially rape your good intentions,
I beg you. Be brave.

But have mercy. Don't think too much of
The merger between mind and filing cabinets when
You start a new adventure.

Down with love, up with business cards!
Punch your head three times; there's no place like the office.
I beg you. Please be brave.
You've started your corporate adventure.

Dreaming of You
by David Doran

i dreamt a dream,
the night before last
with such passion,
such love
that i have never felt
since oblivion became my existance.
in between the sheets
of cloth and REM,
i saw her eyes,
i touched her face
and i smiled at the happiness
that enveloped my heart.

curse you morpheus.
curse these remains
of unforgotten ecstacies,
that torture my sleeping conscience.
how cruel it is
to wake with that smile
and lightened heart,
only to realize,
to remember
the fickleness of such pleasure.
i wake only to weep
for the illusion is gone
evaporated with that smile,
and i'm left hollowed
from the inside out,
thinking,
dreaming of you.

Confession to an Angel
by David Doran

Ignorant she sleeps, unaware of my longing,
Restless I watch, silently wanting,
To be by her side in such a romantic embrace,
But all I can muster is to studder to her face,
So beautiful an angel that rests so near to me,
So lovely a form, so gentle a heartbeat,
Never does she see my silent suffering,
Never will she understand the pain and the sting,
Of being so close to heaven, but being so far from her mind,
Hating myself for not telling her, time after time,
So pure are her eyes, so angelic her hair,
So delicate her touch must be, I can't help but stare,
But stare I must and dream of her everyday,
For one day I will ask her, and brush the silence away.

Don't Leave Me
by David Doran

hush,
it is not time,
the clock lies, gaze at it's shifty eyes,
the sky?
no, it's the curtains,
the shades repel the intrusive day,
you must be mistaken ,,
i hear no ring,
'twas the sound of an angel's whisper,
your whisper,
there was no knock,
the door speaks not
but was the beating of my heart,
please sit, don't go,
no goodbyes, say not farewell,
come back, you mustn't go,
when i'm without you i feel so alone,
i feel so cold.

Imposed Identity
Internal Pain
by Aurelio Benavidez III

With love and anguish I speak with my spirit through written word.

I can only hope and pray that truth I spit is heard.

The false labels of Hispanic and Latino

How these mere words tear down my soul.

In our people, the lost of our true pride how can it be so?

It is as if we forgot what is means to be Mexicano o Chicano.

It's a distinct culture unto it own.

What do you fear when you stare into a mirror?

And see a Mexica Indian standing there.

Mestijo Myth and the derogatory Hijo de la Chingda is nothing to be proud of.

The truth hurts so I hope you feel the knowledge coming off the tip of tongue.

Vendidos fear the reality when it stares at them hard.

I won't be silenced I speak reality with no hold barred.

Remember the Alamo, no remember Cuauhtemoc and the Mexican Indigenous Holocaust.

Out of our beloved gente 23,000,000 human lives lost.

With our identity and dignity nailed to a cross.

Spanish Inquisition forced you into your inferior place in which you falsely fit.

By the same language and culture you ignorantly identify with .

Hispanic/Latino agenda controls us with an economic and political whip.

Speak Espanol and/or English quietly and stay in your place.

But the swallowing of your humanity leaves a horrible taste.

I can tell by the look on your face: that you ridicule and criticize me.

I can't help myself being a spiritual warrior for my people is all I can be.

This in not a personal issue .

Because this profound epidemic affects me, you, and you.

My purpose is not to offend anyone but still I don't apologize.

What matters is the truth and reality that you Mexicanos need to realize!

I don't know if you notice but its hard to back the tears in my eyes.

With love and hope in mi Gente
Aurelio Benavidez III

Porcelain Doll
by Serenity Tomala

You're like that china doll.

The one that sits up, way up,

on the shelf in my room.

The one that mom always said,

"No, no, don't touch.

That dollie's to look at, not to have."

Can't have her.

Can't have you.

I see the other girls,

with their silly plastic dolls,

none like you.

Those dolls are played with,

but then they get boring,

and are tossed aside.

But not you.

I promise.

If I had you,

I would hold you carefully,

and never get bored with you.

I'd never let you break,

never let you go.

But someone will always say,

"No, no, don't touch."

You will always be,

the one I see.

But I can't have you.

This is a Poem
by Serenity Tomala

This is a poem

running through my head.

It is a poem

because it has

rhythm and linebreaks

and works through my thoughts.

Even though

they are pointless,

they are mine.

Simple and smooth,

no drama,

no pain.

Just hear

me now.

Who I am.

Don't dig

deeper.

Things break.

Mind shatters.

Pain.

Torture.

Hurt.

But now,

simple,

easy.

This is a poem.

La fuente de pensamientos
Un poema dedicado a Octavio Paz (1957-1987)
by Irving Manuel Gamboa

A veces me siento como un animal enjaulado
Prisionero de mi propia ignorancia
Barras de acero por todos lados
Cárcel fría y obscura
Cárcel de mi soledad

A veces quisiera morir lentamente
Un poco más rápido que el latir del corazón
Pero un poco más lento que la juventud
Caer lentamente al suelo
Sin manchar el piso de sangre
Y sin dejar pecado en la tierra

A veces quisiera llorar en su ausencia
Que rabia me da ya que nunca hablamos
Pero aun me siento honrado
Y aplastado por el honor de haberlo conocido

"Hace no mucho conocí a un poeta
Más agradable que un profesor
Más dulce que un amigo
No nos conocimos por voz
Lo conocí entre las letras que planto
En una tierra llamada MEXICO
Y me perdí entre sus jardines
Jóvenes y frondosos
Llenos de hermosuras
Rosas Azucenas Girasoles
Y hasta la Hierba hermosa
Radiante y amorosa
Todo eso paso en su tierra
Mi tierra también
La chulada de MEXICO"

Hoy me siento sucio y feliz
De saber que soy un campesino
Y aunque a veces me sienta muy mal
La vida seguirá marchando
Y otras vidas nacerán con la escritura
Como la eternidad de vida
Escrita por Octavio.

Fountain of Thoughts
A Poem to Octavio Paz (1957-1987)
by Irving Manuel Gamboa

At times I feel like a confined beast
Prisoner of my own ignorance
Bars of steel everywhere
Cold and dark gaol
Gaol of my solitude

At time I'd like to die slowly
A little faster than the pounding of my heart
But somehow slower than youth
To slowly fall on the ground
Without the stains of blood upon the floor
And without leaving sin on the soil

At times I'd like to cry on his absence
What a rage, we never talked
Yet I am proud
And dumbfounded with the honour of our meeting

"Not so long ago I met a poet
More pleasant than a professor
Sweeter than a friend
Our voices never met
I knew him through his planted words
In the soils of a land called MEXICO
And I lost myself amongst his gardens
Young and luxuriant
Radiant with beauty
Roses Lilies Sunflowers
And even the handsome weeds
Sprouting magic
All that happened on his land
My land too
Our majestic MEXICO"

Today I feel grateful in dirt
For I know I am a peasant
And even when gloom lingers
Life continues
And other lives will sprout from scriptures
Like the eternity of life
Written by Octavio

A Day Never Forgotten
by Roxanne Hall

I'll never forget the day
I witnessed a life become lost
Her little hand held mine so tight
Hoping all of this just might
Be a dream
That she wished she hadn't seen
She looked up at me
And asked, Where's my mommy?
My weak heart began to crumble
And my tongue began to stumble
Because there were no words I could say
To take this pain away
But mommy wasn't coming back today
She was going 6 feet into the ground
And this little child's life would forever be turned upside down
Because life's clock could not be rewound
But how do you tell her that?
That her hero was strung out on crack
That one day she kept hitting it back to back
That mommy was never ever coming back
Her once bright eyes
Began to glaze over with tears
Because she now had to face the reality of her worst fears
There are no words you can say
That could begin to erase that day
I just held her tight
With all of my might
Hoping that this could somehow ease the fight
Of the memory
Of her mommy's
Burial site.

Lights
by Roxanne Hall

What are you afraid of?
Look deep inside
Young child of mine
Why won't you allow your inner beauty to shine
Sometimes the degree of pain experienced
Lingers within the heart
And makes you drift apart
From society reality
And reside in fantasy

Because in fantasy you can't get hurt
You're free to imagine, to dream
That you now have so much self esteem
But all that has to end
And when it does your life is allowed to begin
It's so hard to break free
And allow your mind to see
More than all the negativity

I once felt the same way
And sometimes I still do
But today I'm here to tell you
To dust yourself off
Or life will pass you by
Because your light is off

You're so busy sitting in darkness
That you can't hear your heart in your chest
Pumping blood through your veins keeping you alive
But somewhere along the lines
You forgot to strive
Walking around with your head down
Using more muscles to frown
It's funny how life can throw you off track
By someone who wants to be a player
A mack
Or by deceit
By the people who think its cool to mistreat
All along you just wanted to be yourself
Contradictions telling you you weren't enough
Too naive to realize it's their loss
And that's why your heart has developed a frost

Please just try
To look deep inside
And turn on that light that was supposed to shine
Because your life is yours not mine

My Monsters
by Colleen Douty

I have four monsters. I carry them everywhere.
They are as much a part of me as my two hands and two feet.
They are different as each day that passes. In every way,
unique in size, color, and temperament.

My Ally-monster has been with me now for, oh, some eight years.
This monster is a frightful one, with olive skin, short brown hair
she jumps, growls, snarls.
She has no fear, there is no mountain she couldn't devour.
Her only weakness is a good book, she gets lost for hours.

My Emmy-monster is so fair with a smatter of freckles across her snout.
This monster has a booming voice, can be heard from miles apart.
She sings, yells, howls.
She'll tell you she's the smartest monster, "everyone says so after all."
Her only weakness is her flare for drama, she gets lost for hours.

My Nate-monster with his caramel complexion and perfect eye lashes
will kill you with his charm. He's slimy sweet and oh so cuddly.
He bats his lashes, grins, holds so tight.
He'll stop your heart with his laughter, silly wit and then "I want to hold you."
His only weakness is congested traffic on the floor, he gets lost for hours.

My Ryno-monster is a brute, so anxious to catch up with all the others.
His dark, sticky chocolate skin looks good enough to eat, if you could catch him.
He grunts, throws, smashes.
He'll take you by surprise with a mess here and there, just follow the trail.
His only weakness is the others. Chasing them he gets lost for hours.

My monsters have weighed me down with a rock of fear.
Imagine plummeting to your death each time one of them bleeds.
Blood, screaming, thrashing, six stitches
A midnight run to the ER the night before vacation dragging you down,
weighing you against all the others who also carry monsters everywhere.

My monsters have managed to excavate a pit of frustration in me.
The never-ending exasperation of relentless repetition.
No…No…No…I said, "NO!"
Within this pit dwells the impression of unfulfilled thirst. This thirst
can only be quenched with the knowledge of who, what, where and why.

My monsters have managed to construct a bridge of love in me.
The all-consuming connection to our future, the branch that binds my love of
growling, howling, holding, throwing
monsters…that I carry everywhere with me. Reminding me of
Allyson, Emily, Nathan and Ryan who are my inspiration in life.

The Giant (and his love)
by Irving Manuel Gamboa

Here I stand upon a rock (said the giant)
And the wind danced high above
As the forest stood strong in defiance
But peaceful
Resembling a dove

Where, where replied his love
Her voice echoing with agony
Tears flowing thereof

Here I stand upon a rock (said the giant)
Trembling with pain
For he could not the wind mock
Being Pliant
Moving and moving like parallel chains

The giant's love then sang a song
To mourn her loss
A silent song recited on silent lips
Each word a breeze of wind
And there stood the motionless he
A growing tree above the highest mountain
High above the blue and cloudy sea

To Whom It May Concern

Hurricane Katrina's wrath tore families apart and destroyed lives.

by Samantha Gehrig

To Whom It May Concern
My mother passed away
She couldn't get to safety
She feared her last few days

To Whom It May Concern
I can't find my daddy
"Everything will be okay"
My mommy whispers sadly

To Whom It May Concern
My baby softly cries
I have no food or water
I pray that she survives

To Whom It May Concern
I watched my wife float away
"Take care of our babies"
Were the last words I heard her say

To Whom It May Concern
My husband wasn't home
I hope that he can find me
I feel so alone

To Whom It May Concern
My Child died in my arms
I have failed as a mother
I could not protect him from harm

To Whom It May Concern
I lost my one true love
He drifted of to heaven
He is guiding me from above

To Whom It May Concern
My son was a heroic man
He bravely gave his life
Taking his sister to dry land

To Whom It May Concern
My family was torn apart
The only thing I feel
Is a sharp pain in my heart

To whom it may concern
So many lives were lost
Their loved ones that survived
Will pay the greatest cost

Superimposed

by Kristin LaTour
Assistant Professor of English

my hand reaches for the door
and your hand is under my fingers
small and soft
my palm covers yours and it dissolves

I lift my face to the mirror
and there is your face
wedding veiled
pink and white and sparkling

there are hauntings here
not of ghosts, but of time
in this house where you have slept
I have slept also, we sleep in summer slumber

I wonder what you felt
I see this painting on a wall
what did your hand see
that I cannot see

I raise my foot on a stair that
your foot tread countless times
did you ever trip
did you ever cry

I see photos of your face
my face
my grandmother's face
and they are the same, divided by degrees of color, nothing more

of what will those in the future say
piecing together puzzle parts
of paintings and poems half finished
your paint dried on the wall
my words scrawled on a page

Romantic in the Opposite Way
by Katie Parker

Two karat Tiffany Setting Solitaire diamond
Once hung around her neck
It's closer to my heart that way
Now, falling from weak grasp

Slumped over the toilet
Resembling a wet wash cloth
Soggy curly hair
Looking like a clump of seaweed, or cooked spinach
Eyes burning like a shot of vodka, and as red as punch
Crying face as droopy and unfortunate as a hush puppy

Slithery, sloth like motion sliding down to the floor
Clawing at the grout to push up so he can see her
See her walk right out the door.

Sleeping With the Fishes in a Red Sea
by Katie Parker

Scarlet screams *harlot!*
Crimson cascades corrupting pure
Red wine waterfalling
Ruby red rock decorating her hand
Cherry stained wood, nicked
Blood red stained study

Body shaped like a warm frequency wave
Sent into a red sea
Pearls failing to act as a buoy
Dress swimming around her down below

Down the Hall
by Katie Parker

Unused exercise ball taking up the floor
Decorated with potato chip bits
Popping out of the navy blueness
Accompanied by tumbleweeds of hair
Bunnies of dust and fish of silver

Oil slick pillow cases anointed
With drool pools dried by dry skin flakes
Dance to the middle of the bed
Hugged by a smoke, bar, booze cloud and
Comforted by a pilling, pungent comforter

Dusty desk plays pallet to nail polish art and
Meeting place for the eye shadow mixer
Books? Ah, coasters are sticky and stuck together
Thanks to cola, cough syrup and cherry sucker juice
Which also drips into the smelly guinea pig's cage

21st Century Prayer
by Irving Manuel Gamboa

There is no justification for the countless deaths of innocents Indians
And all the money used to afford to fire the guns that were used to shoot
The bullets to spill the blood upon the soils of freedom
The spirit lives on and on
Zapata Villa Che Marcos Luther more and more
Our voice will be shut unplugged and disconnected
But communication will survive
Your children will speak our thoughts you children will die for their belongings
Freedom peace liberty justice love
But before there is a movement there must be a revolution
The beginning of flesh bones burning to end the fucking empire of lies
Made of the remains of the dead and all the green papers
All shall burn to warm the bodies of those who fight during the winter
Under the cold white pure snow crushing down the oppression
Those who die will live forever and the name of eternity will carry their bones
To the house of time where the past is frowned upon
And the future shaped by Mayan hands where greener grasses burn under the sky
Wombs of earth for life not worms
Our spirit will pour from guns our blood will drip from bullets
Our voice will kill
The whole universe will change and the whole cosmos too
The revolution within will awake the subconscious of those who sleep while they walk
And then the living will outnumber the dead
Fascist communist capitalist dictators' democrats will all fuck themselves
With knifes carved by pure hand of virgin women free of burden
Our bodies will burn wildly happily endless laughter light
Dragonflies working their way through the pure winds of the beautiful blue
Under the protecting colors of the rainbow war will end
For an eye for another eye will leave all blind
Children of tomorrow will kiss trees and caress the clouds
Smiles will cover the cold stones of graves the cold stones keeping brothers down
Panther and Zapatista brothers the revolutionaries the fighters
The revolution the independence the fight the voice
Those with voice the artists the free the law the order of the new millennium
The timeless era the population the wholeness of unity
The fist that shattered the glass of suffocation
The bomb that killed Hiroshima
The holy writings that killed pagan priests
The cross that hung the Christ
And the blood that cultivates the soils of Europe and the South Americas
The calluses and sweat of my brothers and your brothers
Who carved the majesty of the sun down on earth?
Handmade on stone and the mirrors of the moon brought down to rest at night
Inside the divinity of temples and all the beauty that was will be
Because we missed life for long intervals of time

A gap
Between harmony when Quetzalcoatl traveled through the oceans
To the promised land of the sun where the Aztecs ruled
An empire of blood Jesus came across the planet trapped
Between leather suffocated by disease and epidemics
And he was given to the innocent as food
Those who were stained by vice had strong stomachs and survived the pestilence
The clean people died and crosses were set on fire and they were crucified
In the name of the unknown and the priests rapped the natives
And the sun disappeared and the moon cried blood
The aesthetic construction crushed to build edifices
Made of excrement the bacteria the disease the pandemic demise
Moved on in all directions African brothers died of pain and parasites
Invented by the sons of Belial children of Quetzalcoatl Satan Ahriman Death
The parasites down the vein ate the blood stream and captured the spiral might
And turned the sacred code into a straight line
Bags of beans and rice crushed to powder form to vaccinate the sick
The cure for cancerous rotten flesh as Chinese folks are trampled by tanks
And Colombia poisoned by the chemical agents produced by the native forests
Converted into drug substances by the United States of America
Warriors who eat dead children and smile as they watch the preparation of their food
There is so much to stay only too little time to speak
But School reinforces the law of silence where slavery is legal
Prostitution of cultural values tradition and individuality
They spit on the face of god
In the morning eat his flesh for breakfast and at night the pray
And they vomit and recollect his shattered structure
To follow the cycle of life to reincarnate
They meditate enter a trance while carnivorous worms feast
Upon their thinking apparatus to called brain and then smile as tubes enter their nostrils
And their eyes are blank like they were dead and they drink contaminated orange juice
And their teeth fall apart and their sickened mothers capture cancer
Early in the morning she haunts for disease with guns and arrows and their breasts fall
Plastic surgery reconstructs what was like Frankenstein invented zombies
Babied cry of hunger and the silicon enters through their mouth and their brain dies
Young and blank as death itself but they smile grow and go to school
And they laugh when "Pedro" comes from a different planet
And wonder why Adolph Hitler smiled in his pictures
These children can't understand because they are already dead
But when all things burn all living things will be thankful to live in such era
And we will kneel down and thank Shamash because the sun will burn our flesh
To purify our souls and we will march down the streets with guns machetes and pride
All our broken flags patched together into one single piece of nylon waving in the air
African lions will share the strength of Asian Elephants and they will live in the Andes
With European weapons hiding in the pouches of Kangaroos from Australia
All this will happen soon very soon
All we need is freedom to destroy the pathetic plastic surgeons and plasma screens
Put our faces on the movies and our voices on the CDs' and our voices in their books
And ourselves inside them…

Silent Screamz
by Shi

Nobody gives a shyt
About you, your problems
or the shyt youre going through
How dare you impose upon
Their precious time
With sorrow in your voice and
Tears in your eyes
Come on!
Youre supposed to hold
The weight of the world
On your shoulders with grace
Oh-expect to be ridiculed and
Mentally and verbally abused
If the look of hurt
Forms on your face
The stress of the world
Is yours and yours alone
But you must act as savior and psychiatrist
To the phony voice on
The other end of the phone
I fall into my music
Singing the depth of my soul
Until I can take no more
I remain positive
Even as the sun fades
And the rain begins to pour
Now a smile forms
To disguise the pain
Tears falling
With their own meaning
Camouflaged by the rain
I found a new way to cope
But even writing books, songs and poems
Offers little help
I used to talk to anyone
That would listen
And still lost control
Of my emotions
Now I stay to myself
Sheltered by my deep soul
Wondering what worldly possessions
Would actually deem me whole
I scream inside
Saying fukk the world
But yet in this world
I must remain
But here I go rambling again
Like any of you give a shyt

Let the Tears Fall
by Shi

fate brought us together
only destiny did not come
lack of silence has destroyed
what love had built
like fists flying in open air
i can do nothing more than
breathe and cry
so i let the tears fall

i go through emotions
anger and despair
feeling like an outside force
is messing with the connection
we both share
i feel the haze in ur mind
the confusion in your heart
and the hopelessness in my soul
so i let the tears fall

i hurt when i hurt you
i shed the tears u cry inside
i feel the love you have for me
the love you deny
i understand the choice you made
but what about the outcome?
the emptiness
you do not know yet
i can not make you see
because you do not
believe in me
so i let the tears fall

I am a woman
by Shi

The beauty of my soul
Magnified through my eyes
Tells stories of shame, lies,
Pain, defeat and how I have overcome
All that has lain dormant
In my heart and mind
With sickening and selfish intent

The shattered heart and broken bones
Certain to never mend
Silent tears release the anger
Slowly carrying my being from danger
Knowing that a lil more anguish
Will cause me to explode
...Or become numb...

Too tired to bust through the wall
That I call shelter
I fall against it
Waiting for my strength to come
Giving up hope that it ever will
Part of me wishing it never does...
Not a care for what lies ahead
Uncertain still of what yesterday was

Now the drain of life
Holds a tarnished ring
Unspoken words
A world gone mute
A silent world where
Birds no longer sing
And hearts no longer feel
Understand I am humble
Broken down, made soft
I am a woman...

The Wonder and the Wanderer
by Nick Billone

There's something holding me back.
There's something telling me to stop.
There was love at first, I'm sure.
The equation doesn't always end that way.
Sometimes, it ends with distance or heartbreak.
That's the thrill of finding the answers,
it takes effort to see you fail or succeed.

So we settle for something lacking
just to take up some time.
Late night dinner and a movie,
walks threw all the city streets.
It's just not the same,
it's not as filling as it used to be.
It's just not what it used to be.

And we're constantly evolving.
Sell ourselves on telephones and computers.
Handing out personalities on the t.v.
Hoping for someone to take us
from the drudgery of work then home.
We're constantly evolving, we're on the move.
There's no time for love,
I'm already late.

Painted portraits of a lovers kiss
and a locket around a lovers neck.
As he stumbles out the door
of another lovers apartment floor.
Now we've gotten a little greedy.
We're starting to indulge.
We've lost the point.
On a map, it says, "you are here"

There's times when the sun and moon align.
"Don't look, it'll burn your eyes out." I'm told.
When we're told not to, we tell ourselves to.
The wandering mind wanders where it's led.
The wanderer's to blame, not the one's wonder.
I wonder why I'm late.
Where do I have to be?
"You are here"

Open Call for Submissions!

Deadline for Issue #116 - 3/1/06

Deadline for Issue #117 - 10/1/06

How to Submit Creative Work to **WORDEATER**

WORDEATER is the literary and creative magazine of Joliet Junior College. The magazine is published twice yearly. The editorial board of the magazine will consider for publication original poetry, plays, short fiction, translations, personal essays, literary essays, essays on popular culture, art criticism, autobiographical prose, interviews, storyboards, photography, graphics and other reproducible art. The magazine is composed primarily of student work, but also includes work by Joliet Junior College faculty, staff, and alumni. *Wordeater* is looking for creative work of all kinds of the highest quality. Please note that not all submissions will be accepted for publication. An editorial board composed of students and the faculty advisor decides which work is accepted. Please keep in mind the following as you submit your work:

- All work must be word-processed (or typed on 8 ˚ x 11" paper).
- All work must be original and unpublished.
- All work should be double-spaced.
- All work should be proofread for typographical and grammatical mistakes.
- The subject matter and language of work submitted should be appropriate for the Joliet Junior College community.
- Please include a cover sheet (with your name, address, and phone number) with the work you submit. Please identify yourself as a current or former student or a present or former faculty or staff member. Works, however, will be judged anonymously.
- Except for original artwork, submissions will not be returned.
- Editorial changes may be made for readability.
- All work should be sent to wordeater@jjc.edu or through the *Wordeater*'s webpage: http://www.jjc.edu/Dept/English/Wordeater .

WORDEATER

wordeater@jjc.edu
Joliet Junior College
1215 Houbolt Road
Joliet, IL 60431-8938

Wordeater #115

Wordeater is the biannual literary / arts magazine of Joliet Junior College. The magazine prints submissions from current and former students, staff and faculty. The magazine accepts original, creative works of any kind, including poetry, plays, short fiction, translations, personal or literary essays, interviews, autobiographical prose, photography, graphic art and other reproducable artworks. Please submit work to wordeater@jjc.edu or to S. Murphy, English / Foreign Languages Deptartment, C-1070.

Editorial Board*

Margaret Boehle Brandi Campbell Brett Buryj
Bree Lennox Lisa Raimondi

Faculty Advisor
Stacey V. Santoro-Murphy
Assistant Professor of English

Awards

Poetry

The John Stobart Award for Poetry was established in honor of the founder and guiding light of *Wordeater*, John Stobart. As faculty sponsor, he shepherded it through 106 issues. He retired from JJC's English / Foreign Languages Department in 1999.

Porcelain Doll
by Serenity Tomala

Fountain of Thought
by Irving Manuel Gamboa

Short Fiction

The Lump Science
by Brandi Campbell

The Box
Faraz Khaja

**An editorial board, composed each semester, reviews the submissions to make determinations about what will be published in that semester's issue. If you are interested in becoming a member of the ditorial board, or in becoming an editorial assisnat , please send a letter of interest to wordeater@jjc.edu.*

* A special note of apology: Lisa Raimondi also served as a member of the Editorial Board for Issue #114 of the *Wordeater*. The *Wordeater* regrets the error which ommited her name from the magazine.

Back Cover Art
Chicago
by Luis Lopez